ISSN 0712-7774

CEREBUS

GOING HOME

33

$2.25 USA • $3.50 CANADA • £1.50 UK

264
MAR

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CEREBUS
NO. 264 MARCH 2001

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Administrative Assistant

GOING HOME

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BOOK ONE
Sudden Moves
(Cerebus 232 to 239)

•

BOOK TWO
Fall and the River
(Cerebus 240 to 250)

•

BOOK THREE
Form & Void
(Cerebus 251 to 265)

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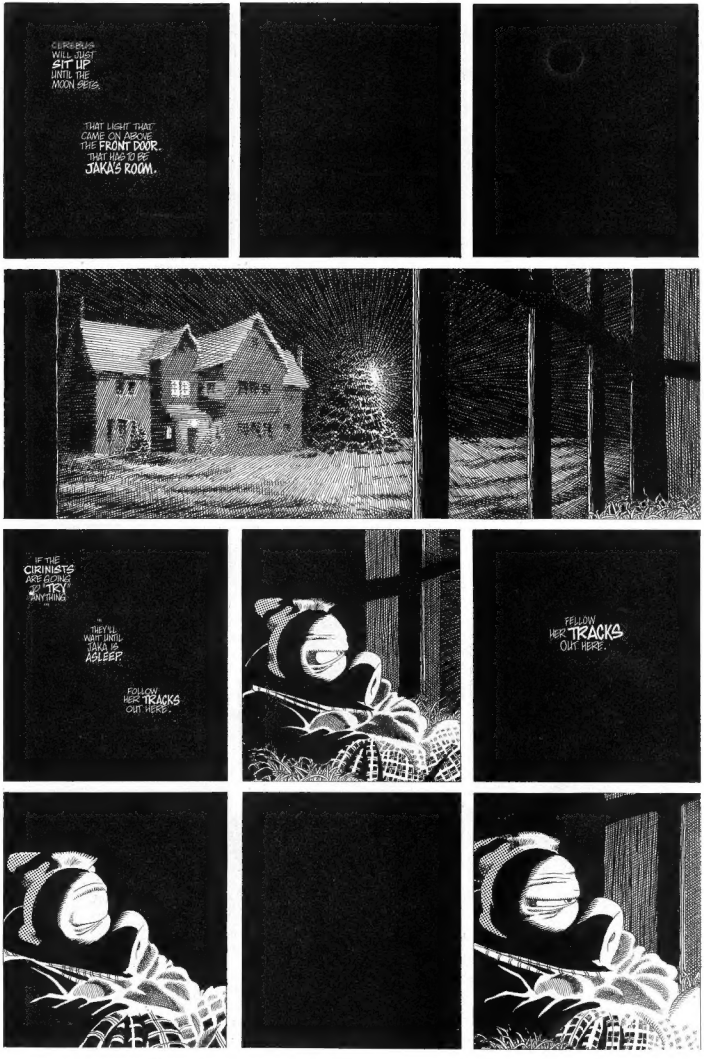
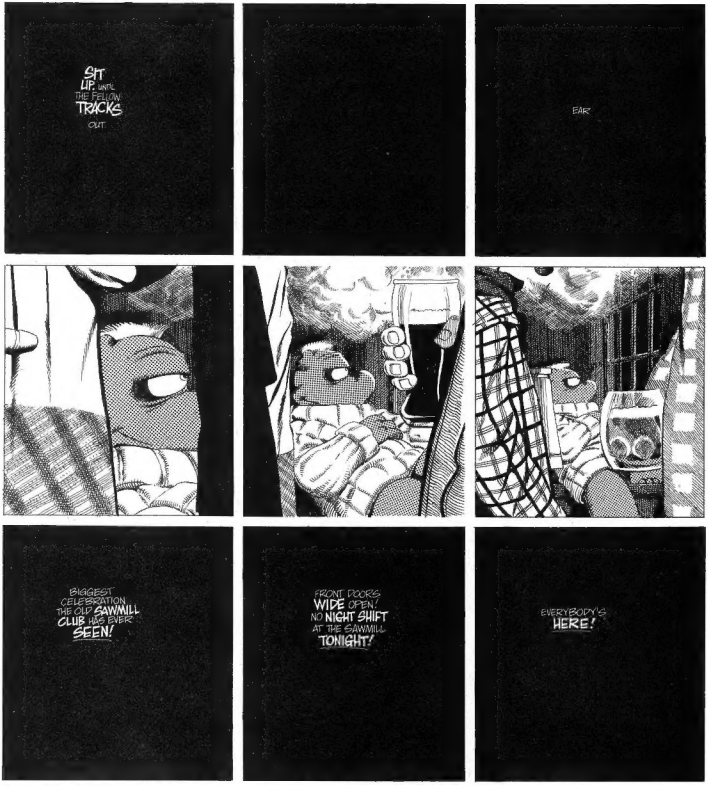

CERBERUS WILL JUST SIT UP UNTIL THE MOON SETS.
THAT LIGHT THAT CAME ON ABOVE THE FRONT DOOR. THAT HAS TO BE JAKA'S ROOM.
IF THE CIRINISTS ARE GOING TO TRY ANYTHING
THEY'LL WAIT UNTIL JAKA IS ASLEEP.
FOLLOW HER TRACKS OUT HERE.
FOLLOW HER TRACKS OUT HERE.


SIT UP, UNTIL THE FELLOW TRACKS OUT
EAR
BIGGEST CELEBRATION THE OLD SAWMILL CLUB HAS EVER SEEN!
FRONT DOORS WIDE OPEN, NO NIGHT SHIFT AT THE SAWMILL TONIGHT!
EVERYBODY'S HERE!

ZEKE NEVER THOUGHT HE'D BE SHAKIN' HANDS WITH A FOR REAL POPE!
HA-HA.. FORMER POPE
CEREBUS IS JUST GLAD TO BE HOME AGAIN, MR. MORTON.
JAKA TELLING CROTCH-FACE ABOUT THE BARGE
...OR...
OH SHIT! NO! SHE'S TELLING HIM ABOUT THE CATACOMBS!
CROTCH-FACE HAS HIS KNIFE OUT.
MAKE IT QUICK, CROTCH-FACE. DON'T LET JAKA SUFFER.

KLAK
REE
UNH
GOOD MORNING.
JAKA!
DON'T TELL ANYONE EVER
YOU WERE DOWN IN THE CATACOMBS.
WHY?
BECAUSE WOMEN AREN'T "ALLOWED" DOWN THERE.

THAT'S JUST PLAIN SILLY! I PROBABLY KNOW MORE ABOUT
JAKAAAA
THE BLACK TONTAC EMPIRE THAN ANY DOZEN MEN WHO
JAKA.
SAM
PSSH.
DOUBLE SLITTY-EYED "PALM FACE" AND A DOOR SLAM.
NOT CERBERUS' FAVOURITE WAY TO START THE DAY.
TAK
TAC

CREE
KLAK
EKLAK
JAKA?
CEREBUS IS ONLY THINKING ABOUT YOUR WELFARE...
IF ANYONE EVEN SUSPECTED THAT YOU HAD BEEN IN THE
I PROMISE I WILL NOT SO MUCH AS BREATHE ALOUD THE WORD "CATACOMBS"
IF YOU PROMISE TO STICK THAT "LORD AND MASTER" TONE OF YOURS "YOU-KNOW-WHERE"
UNTIL WE ARE ACTUALLY IN SAND HILLS CREEK.
MWAH.
MWAH.

HEY! It's MORNING!
YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO COME AND GET CERBERUS
WHEN THE MOON SET.
I KNOW.
THE COUPLE WHO JOIN THE HUNTING LODGE TOLD ME WERE TWO MILES TO THE NORTH OF
THE MOTHERS'
TERRITORY.
THE MOTHERS ARE ALLOWED IN...
...BUT ONLY IN PAIRS...
...AND NOT WITH WEAPONS OF ANY KIND.
WHEN I HEARD THAT
I FIGURED WE BOTH MIGHT AS WELL GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP.

I HOPE THAT WAS ALL RIGHT
OH, AYE. AS LONG AS "THE COUPLE" WEREN'T CURRENT AGENTS -- AND AS LONG AS THE D'SHIVAS HAVEN'T SMUGGLED A WHOLE DIVISION OVER THE UNDEFENDED PARTS OF THE BORDER, TWO AT A TIME -- AND AS LONG AS THEY HAVEN'T GOT A SECRET CACHE OF WEAPONS FROM THE
I SAID
"I HOPE THAT WAS ALL RIGHT"
OH AYE!
FINE
OH, GOOD. I WORRIED ABOUT MY ABILITY TO MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICES IN THOSE SITUATIONS
SINCE I AM
A MERE WOMAN

GETTING ALL THE SARCASM OUT OF YOUR SYSTEM BEFORE WE GET TO SAND HILLS CREEK?
SARCASM?
SARCASM?
DOESN'T SARCASM ORIGINATE IN THE MORE RIGHTLY DEVELOPED PARTS OF THE BRAIN? I MEAN
DOESN'T SARCASM REQUIRE A PENIS?!
UH-OH
(UH-OH?)
BACK SPASM.
NONO! THIS ISN'T SARCASM! THIS IS VITRIOL. I'M GETTING OUT OF MY SYSTEM.
VITRIOL AND VAGINA.
THEY BOTH START WITH "VEE"

SHIT SHIT SHIT
AND MAKE NO MISTAKE. WHEN WE DO GET TO SAND HILLS CREEK
C'MON CERBERUS KNOWS WHAT HE HAS TO DO.
(MAYBE IT'LL GO AWAY ON ITS OWN)
YOU'RE GOING TO HEAR PLENTY MORE OF THIS "BEHIND CLOSED DOORS" LITTLE MISTER
IT DOESN'T GO AWAY ON ITS OWN
(MAYBE THIS TIME IT WILL...)
ALSO: WHO'S TO SAY THAT SAND HILLS CREEK HASN'T CHANGED?
OR THAT SAND HILLS CREEK ISN'T CERBERUS OF CHANGING IT
C'MON... TAKE IT THE WAY AHEAD AND CERBERUS STILL HAS TO TELL HER ABOUT
"YOU-KNOW-WHAT."
BY GOLLY! MAYBE ALL THE WOMEN OF SAND HILLS CREEK NEED IS FOR SOMEONE TO OPEN THEIR EYES AND SHOW THEM.
OKAY, THIS IS GOING TO HURT.
ON THREE.
ONE.
TWO.

YAGH!
I'M SORRY I'M SORRY
DON'T HIT ME
WHEW.
?
HEH.
BACK OFFDAN
MWAH.
MWAH

CEREBUS PROMISED TELL HER SOON?
(DON'T WORRY-- CEREBUS IS JUST WAITING FOR THE RIGHT MOMENT.)
CEREBUS HAS BEEN WAITING FOR THE RIGHT MOMENT SINCE THE WALL OF TSI!
(SOON.)
(CEREBUS WILL TELL HER SOON.)
SAND HILLS CREEK IS JUST OVER THE NEXT RIDGE!
(OKAY! OKAY... CEREBUS WILL JUST BE REGAL. SUBTLE ABOUT IT.)
DON'T FEEL BAD WHEN YOU SEE THE BIG "WELCOME HOME" CEREBUS GETS
?
"KEEP" WOULD I "FEEL BAD"?
YOU KNOW- BECAUSE THIS TIME CEREBUS IS THE BIG DEAL.
FORMER PRIME MINISTER OF TSORT. FORMER POPE.
RETURNING HOME

DON'T BE SILLY. I'M ALWAYS DELIGHTED WHEN SOMEONE ELSE IS FORCED TO BE THE CENTER OF
ALSO! WE HAVE TO TELL EVERYONE THAT WE'RE MARRIED
PHEEOO MEE
SAND HILLS CREEK IS A VERY STRICT ORTHODOX TARIMITE.
?
BUT--
NO "BUTS", JAKA!
WE'LL TELL EVERYONE THAT WE'RE MARRIED AND THAT'S FINAL!
BUT--*
JAKA? WHAT DID CEREBUS JUST

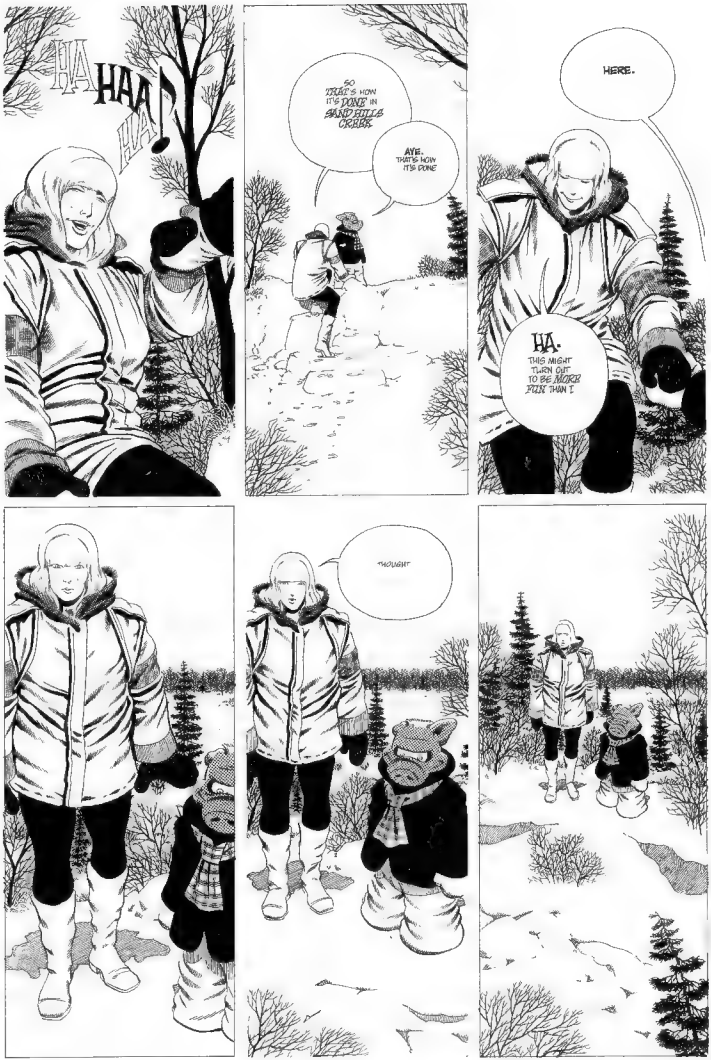
BUT WE HAVEN'T GOT RINGS!!
WHAT?
WE HAVEN'T GOT WEDDING RINGS
OH
OH AYE.
WELL
WE'LL JUST TELL EVERYONE THAT WE LOST THEM
LOST THEM
AYE
LOST THEM WHERE?
LOST THEM IN THE BIG HAIL STORM.

LOST THEM HOW IN THE BIG FLAT STORM?
WE LOST THEM IN THE TENT.
IN THE TENT?
HOW DO YOU LOSE TWO WEDDING RINGS IN A TENT?
WE ACCIDENTALLY LEFT THEM BEHIND.
LIKE YOU DID WITH MISSY
BECAUSE WE THOUGHT WE WERE COMING RIGHT BACK

WAIT WAIT WAIT
WHY DID WE TAKE OUR WEDDING RINGS OFF IN THE FIRST PLACE?
IT DOESN'T MAKE ANY
WHAT DID CEREBUS TELL YOU ABOUT "MOUTHING OFF"?
STOMP STOMP STOMP

STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
WAIT A SECOND
I GET IT.
IT ISN'T MY JOB TO THINK ABOUT THOSE THINGS
IS IT?
?
WAY.

SO IF SOMEONE ASKS ME
"MRS. CEREBUS? WHERE'S YOUR WEDDING RING?"
I JUST SAY "WHY - I DON'T KNOW!"
"WHY DON'T YOU ASK MY HUSBAND?"
AYE.
AND IF THEY COME BACK AND SAY:
"CEREBUS SAYS YOU BOTH LOST YOUR WEDDING RINGS IN A TENT."
I JUST SAY: "WELL IF THAT'S WHAT HE SAYS! THEN THAT MUST BE WHAT HAPPENED!"
AYE


HA
HAA
HAA!
SO THAT'S HOW IT'S DONE IN SAND HILLS CREEK.
AYE. THAT'S HOW IT'S DONE
HERE.
HA. THIS MIGHT TURN OUT TO BE MORE FUN THAN I
"HOUGHT"

("PARDON?")
PARDON?
(HEH-HEH CERBERUS KNEW SHE WOULDN'T HEAR HIM THE FIRST TIME)
CERBERUS SAID: "IT LOOKS AS IF THEY'VE CANCELLED THE DAY SHIFT AT THE SAWMILL TOO."
("OH.")
("SO... WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?")
OH.
MEANING... ...WHAT?
MEANING THAT EVERYONE IS ALREADY AT THE SAWMILL CLUB
WAITING FOR US
C'MON!

TO HAM & HAM NOT

continued from last issue

It's hard for me to imagine Hemingway writing this letter if Edward Scott had mentioned *anything* about Hemingway defending Mary's honour "with a sword" in his second column. As with head-butting an airplane door open, to do so would seem to imply a level of stupidity that is virtually subhuman. Did he think it was a joke? Did he think that his semi-invalid status or the fact that he was *the* Ernest Hemingway gave him some kind of special dispensation? Was he so severely brain-damaged that he thought he and Edward Scott were just going to bluster at each other for a letter or two and then the whole thing would just go away? I also had to look askance at the self-admitted "Mary's girl" talking about *anyone* wearing a "pink shirt".

Anyway, at some point "let's step outside" did, indeed, turn into a duel which Hemingway would have to fight in order to defend Mary's "honour" (quotation marks mine) or lose his own good name for appearing to agree with her.

"or something like that."

Mind-boggling that Mary is so unutterably clueless about the Masculine Seriousness of what was going on. Obviously, she still thinks that this is all "childish" and "a tempest in a thimble" and it will stay that way as long as she continues to describe it that way. "Or something like that".

Now, I know about as much about *duels* as I do about *hunting*, but I'm reasonably certain that Hemingway—as the one challenged—had an option in the choice of weapons. Clearly, with his various breaks, fractures and dislocations, he was not going to be much good with a sword. Very possibly, Edward Scott had the courage to challenge EH to a duel only because he was aware of what bad shape Hemingway was *in* (and, to say the least, Hemingway describing just *how* bad that shape *was* in a letter front-loaded with insults, I do *not* see as a stroke of strategic brilliance). So, it seems to me that Hemingway's best bet would have been firearms of some description—both for his greater familiarity with them and for the fact that a wounded man would have a greater chance of fighting "even up" with a .45 (let's say) than with a sword. If Hemingway had been as big a man as his reputation would indicate, he could even have suggested *shotguns* at ten paces. You know. "So, how's *your* nerve, Edward?"

"Dr. Pedro Pessino came to call..."

Edward Scott chose as his "second," Pedro Pessino, a radiologist and the husband of Clara Park Pessino, the owner of the *Havana Post*.

Courtesy of the John F. Kennedy Library, here are the two letters sent by Dr. Pedro Pessino to Hemingway after their meeting (translation by Cristina Serrano):

August 24, 1954

Dear Mr. Hemingway,

Enclosed please find a copy of the letter I wrote to Mr. Edward Scott to inform him about our interview.

Mr. Scott was not satisfied with the contents of that interview and, as expected, he wishes to take this matter to a Court of Honour.

I invite you to choose two gentlemen that together with the two other members Mr. Scott selects will appoint a fifth member, who will become the president of the Court.

As you are perfectly aware, the members should be chosen within forty-eight hours. If you do not select any representatives, a unilateral Court will be formed.

Yours truly,

Dr. Pedro Sanchez Pessino

[Handwriting] *Line and* [illegible], *truth* [illegible] [Illegible]: *F7152 and B2141*

August 23, 1954

Dear Mr. Scott,

I visited Mr. Hemingway to ask him to define his intentions, as the conversations I held with you were rather contradictory.

Mr. Hemingway reiterated that, as a husband, he had to stick to his wife's story.

He also expressed his wish not to fight a duel with you, mentioning that he did not consider you to be fit to fight with him.

At the end of the conversation he said he had no intent to press this matter.

At no time did he make any attempts to take back his insults.

I now consider my enquiries finished.

Yours truly,

Dr. Pedro Sanchez Pessino

"As a husband he had to stick to his wife's story"?!

He's challenged to an honest-to-God, for-real, life-and-death, *mano-a-mano* duel and he tells the "second" of the man challenging him to the duel that *he, the* Ernest Hemingway "had to stick with his *wife's story*"? He had "no intent to press this matter." What is he *talking* about? *He's* the one being *challenged*. The one doing the *challenging* is the one *pressing the matter*. Pessino must've thought he was dealing with a certifiable lunatic. At the very least, he could be certain that he *wasn't* dealing with a *man*. No, when push

came to shove, Hemingway showed that the most he would ever be was a mere *husband*.

26/8/54

Dear Dr. Pessino:

Thank you for your letter of August 24th which arrived in this morning's mail at 8:30.

For good and sufficient reasons I do not choose to meet Mr. Edward Scott on the so-called field of honor nor anywhere else. I will answer no challenges from him and will send no friends of mine to meet with his friends. If any tribunal interprets this as being motivated by cowardice I believe they would be in error.

I am not a publicity seeker and I will not be provoked into something which can only lead to the worst form of publicity.

Aside from other considerations my obligation at this time is to continue my writing and regain my health. At the present time I am fighting no duels with anyone. If any friends of Mr. Scott consider that to be an act of cowardice they are at liberty to think so. But it is a decision made by a man who has served in war with honor and is fully conscious of his obligations.

Since I have let you know my decision reached after mature consideration, and after talking to you, there is little point in explaining further.

I enjoyed meeting you very much and I hope you and your family are in good health.

Yours very truly,
Ernest Hemingway

And that, as they say, is the ball game. Hemingway loses his good name and his personal honour and admits himself to be a coward in a half-page letter which is (at least) more subdued in tone than the one which had provoked Edward Scott's challenge in the first place. I would suspect, however, that this is more attributable to Hemingway's natural cowardice than to any sort of late-blooming civilized nature. Note that Hemingway doesn't even *attempt* to fabricate "good and sufficient reasons"; there is just the empty phrase itself, the twice-mentioned "cowardice," and, well, that *is* the ball game.

He tries to hang on, having little but a nodding acquaintanceship with masculine honour and a wife more than amenable to manufacturing reality out of a delusional whole cloth which has nothing to do with the actual state of things. He *does* hang on, until the coming of Fidel Castro and his revolutionary band. On a routine patrol after Batista was swept from power, two of Castro's soldiers shoot Hemingway's favourite pet, the sweet-tempered Black Dog, in cold blood. Dissociated from any grasp of reality, let alone truth, even Mary and Ernest Hemingway recognize that it is now time for them to go. In another age a man wouldn't wait until strangers shot his dog. Having lost his personal honour and his good name, in another time, a man would know the necessity to move far away, to exile himself from the environment where he had so disgraced himself that there was no hope of redemption. No hope of redemption in *this* life, anyway. In just such a fashion had Oscar Wilde departed England forever on his release from prison, to live the remaining years of his life on the continent as Sebastien Melmoth.

The Hemingways moved to Ketchum, Idaho: sufficiently desolate, sufficiently at a remove from San Francisco de Paula that—had they done so five years earlier—one could almost regard Hemingway as at long last having found some vestige of a gentleman within himself. But, no. They had to shoot his dog first. It's hard for me to imagine a man sinking that low.

Page 557 - *How It Was*, page 636

"Tutti me...Chiamano bionda."

Lyrics, evidently, to an old Italian folksong which, on the evening of July 1, 1961, as Mary and Ernest got ready for bed in their respective bedrooms, they sang together.

Page 559 - *How It Was*, page 636

"The next morning the sounds of a couple of drawers banging shut awakened me and, dazed, I went downstairs..."

Page 560 - *How It Was*, page 636

"... and saw a crumpled heap of bathrobe and blood, the shotgun lying in the disintegrated flesh, in the front vestibule of the sitting room."

Page 561 -

"I think no wife..."

From Denis Brian's *The True Gen:*

Denis Brian: *It was strange that she left the keys around for him to get ammunition to kill himself.*

Jeffrey Meyers: *She left them over the sink and when someone asked why, she replied, "I think no wife has the right to deprive her husband of his possessions."*

How It Was, page 636

"For an hour I shook, unable to control my muscles. Then in a flash of sanity I wondered why I should be so destroyed by the sudden violence I had long *but too vaguely* anticipated" *[emphasis mine]*

On the other hand, whenever the discussion turns 'round to the genders being "equal *before the Law*," well, that is something with which I am in *complete* agreement.

And I think indicting Mary Welsh Hemingway on a charge of first-degree murder in the death of her husband—based on the above information—would have been a very good place to start.

Page 562 - Ngui: He is dead.

Page 563 - Charo: He has left this world.

Page 581 - In his imperfect recollection of the Swahili for "God. In the hand of God," (*Mungu. Mungu mkono*) Cerebus accidentally makes use of several different words in the same language: "*mdomo*," which translates as "mouth" and "*mto moto*," which translates, roughly, as "hot stream" or "hot river".

Considering how he and Jaka effect their escape from their predicament, this raises several interesting questions about aardvarkian nature...

...which, of course, I am completely unwilling to answer.

un-proofed

DEAR JEFF SMITH

Sorry it's taken me so long to get back to you about this, Jeff, but, considering that it took *you* nearly five years to "go public" with *your* side of our disagreement(s)—and in light of my own avowed intention to limit myself to writing *only* "Chasing Scott" and "To Ham & Ham Not" here in the back of the book (and nothing elsewhere) for the three-years-minus-two-months it was going to take me to finish *Going Home*—I didn't think that time was of the essence.

My "sabbatical" was partly an exercise in self-discipline and partly my concession to the comic-book environment. Having been "all over the place" in promoting self-publishing as a viable direct market vehicle for comic-book creators for three years or so...

[and—whatever *else* you have attempted to *portray my efforts as* in subsequent years—that is *all* that I was trying to do. I know you find it hard to believe that the direct market existed before you came along, Jeff, but believe me it did. And there was a time when virtually the entire direct market—most especially publishers like Gary Groth, Denis Kitchen and Mike Richardson—made a great point of the fact that self-publishing was *not* a viable option and that Dave Sim was the "exception that proved the rule". My efforts on behalf of self-publishing were not to create a "self-publishing movement" (as you keep saying), but to *disprove* Groth, Kitchen, Richardson *et al* and to show that it was possible—more than possible—for others *besides* Dave Sim to make a living self-publishing their work and *only* self-publishing their own work. I intended to devote a fixed amount of time to that task (which I did) and then I intended to walk away (which I did) and—*if*, thereupon, self-publishing proved itself to *not* be a viable option for others (without my on-going, hands-on interference)—I intended to eat *Crow* back issues (as it were) and admit that I was wrong *and* that I *was*, in fact, some sort of mystical being, the *only one* endowed with the ability to self-publish successfully. The fact that you are one of the outstanding examples that assisted me in *refuting* that misapprehension is one of the reasons—'til *now*, anyway—that I have not responded to your own vague but passionate insinuations that "Dave Sim is terribly, terribly, terribly wrong and terribly, terribly, terribly evil in some way". However inadvertently, you helped me to disprove the *only* misapprehension about myself that really concerned me: that I was uniquely and exclusively suited to self-publish. The rest of the "terribly, terribly, terribly wrong and terribly, terribly, terribly evil" stuff is just part of the price one pays for being a non-feminist in a feminist world. Water off a duck's back.]

...it seemed as if a comparable period of keeping the direct market "Dave Free" (outside the pages of *Cerebus*) was the least that I could do. Apart from a letter to *The Comics Buyer's Guide* on the occasion of Gil Kane's passing, a press release when *Going Home* caught us flat-footed by selling out its second print run too quickly and a cover and introduction for *Dork Tower* and an interview or two for small fanzines, I stuck by that vow. As the three-years-minus-two-months unfolded, I reminded myself that if there was anything which really stuck in my craw, I could address it after the three-years-minus-two-months were over. Many things stuck in my craw (my craw just seems to be constructed that way) but, as the three-years-minus-two-months came to an end, nothing had really "stuck" (craw-wise) that I could count worthy of attention. Attention, in my view, better spent preparing myself, mentally, physically and artistically for the final three-year-climb up the final rock face of my own personal Mount Everest, the 300-issue *Cerebus* project.

Except one.

Just about a year ago at this time, I was still "pissed off" (a definite exception to the rule of my largely non-emotional life) about your assertion in your *Comics Journal* interview (the belated Trilogy Tour issue) that you had threatened to give me a "fat lip" that time that I stayed in your lovely A-frame house overlooking the San Andreas Fault.

Can't remember the last time I ever said this, but I'm saying it now—to you, Jeff.

You are *lying*.

(If anyone *doubts* that you are lying, I invite them to read what I wrote about that visit in *Reads*—page 241—and compare it with *your recollection* of what I wrote as you "reconstructed" it—that is to say as you *completely fabricated my words*—in the aforementioned interview)

Leaving aside your "Big Johnson Bone" fabrications, I'm not sure what my reaction would've been *had* you, indeed, threatened to give me a fat lip. I find accurate perception a sufficiently arduous on-going task without muddying the waters of perception by dealing in various permutations of the hypothetical. I

suspect I would've asked to use the phone and called the nearest hotel and then the nearest limo company and made arrangements to leave (since you had picked me up in a limo, I could at least be sure that one could have made it up those mountain roads) and *then* I would've taken you up on your little "challenge" once I was sure that I wasn't staying *under your roof* any longer.

But, of course, there *was no* "challenge".

That's the really *infuriating* part of this whole business, Jeff: your assertion in the interview that you presented me with this "challenge," "everything got very quiet" and then you proceeded to "enjoy your weekend". The comic-book field is not a particularly *masculine* environment so, for a certain unknown-but-presumably-*large* percentage of the people who read your interview, the whole thing was very straightforward. You threatened me and I backed down. For a likewise unknown-but-presumably-*small* percentage of the people who read your interview—that is for the (dozen? two dozen? three dozen?) *men* as opposed to *males* in the *Comics Journal's* readership, let's face it, Jeff. You were calling me a coward who backs down from another man's challenge to settle things man-to-man. And then you *compounded* your insult by portraying me as a *weasel* who would stay *under another man's roof after* having backed down from *that man's challenge to a fight.*

Off-and-on, I have now spent the better part of a year trying to figure out how to address another man's entirely fictional "challenge" to "step outside" (presumably we would have stepped outside as opposed to "duking it out" in your living room) made five years after the "fact". At the height of my "pissed-offedness," I just kept thinking to myself, "I'd like to see him *try*."

Once my "pissed offedness" had subsided (it took a few weeks), to my own not inconsiderable amusement I realized that that was *exactly* the sum and substance of my reaction. All emotion aside:

I'd like to see you *try*, Jeff.

I have to confess that I never thought that, at the ripe old age of forty-four (forty-five in May) I would be "stepping into the ring" with someone, least of all a fellow cartoonist. No matter how much of a fighter you are—George Foreman aside—it's really a game for one's twenties and thirties. But, clearly, I can't just let this *pass* without taking *some* action to defend myself from this...(*whatever* you call it. Before *this, who* would have *needed* a *word* for "lying about a challenge to fight man-to-man"?)

[I *do* understand—*given* the fact that I am *not* a feminist—I have to accept that it is "open season" on Dave Sim. Any feminist is going to *feel* him- or herself *more* than entitled to talk about me behind my back and to exert any and all efforts to destroy my reputation and credibility through gossip, innuendo and outright lies. I would expect nothing less of the unfairer sex and their allies and I knew that was the inevitable result of declaring myself to be "not a feminist" in an almost wholly feminist environment.

But you are *supposed* to do it *behind my back*, Jeff. That is how the feminist game is played. "Girl fighting," as it were. However. To lie, in a public forum, about having offered to give another man a "fat lip." *That's* something else again.]

I would assume from your choice of the phrase that you have had a certain amount of fight experience. Offering to give someone a "fat lip" implies a disproportionately larger amount of fight experience on the part of the "offerer" than on the part of the "offeree".

I have to say that in the short space of time that we knew each other, I never *once* thought of you as being a fighter but, presumably, I was wrong about that. Or maybe I wasn't.

Which brings us back to "I'd like to see him try":

I will fly to Columbus on any date that you would care to name and I will give you three three-minute "rounds" to try to give me a "fat lip". I'm in the light heavyweight class—on any given day between five and ten pounds lighter than a heavyweight. I would assume you are somewhere in that vicinity as well. I have ten-ounce gloves. Opinion is divided as to which sort of gloves dish out the greater punishment: sixteen-ounce (just because they're heavier) or ten-ounce (because there's less "cushion"). If *your* opinion is that ten-ounce gloves won't do the job for you ("fat lip-wise"), let me know which weight you prefer and I'll pick up a pair. Or if you want to go all the way up to *twenty-four ounce* gloves I'm more than amenable. Likewise with headgear. I'm comfortable fighting without it. If you prefer headgear, just let me know.

I'll let *you* pick the venue and the time keeper and the referee and I'm more than willing to listen to any requirements you might have that I haven't covered here.

Just in case some "bright lights" out there get the idea of turning this into a benefit for the CBLDF or some other charity at a convention, let me head you off at the pass right now:

Having had a year to try to figure out how to *explain this* to a largely feminist, largely feminized crowd I figure the best bet is a (may God forgive me) *movie* analogy:

Do you remember in the movie *The Color of Money*, the sequel—make that, the "sequel"—to *The Hustler* where the Tom Cruise character tells the Paul Newman character that he "threw" their big championship game, so he could "clean up" on side bets? And the Paul Newman character corners the Tom Cruise character and challenges him to a game, a *for-real* game? And he says to the Tom Cruise character, "Let's clean this up"?

That's what I am doing here. You can't "clean up" a mess like this in a circus atmosphere.

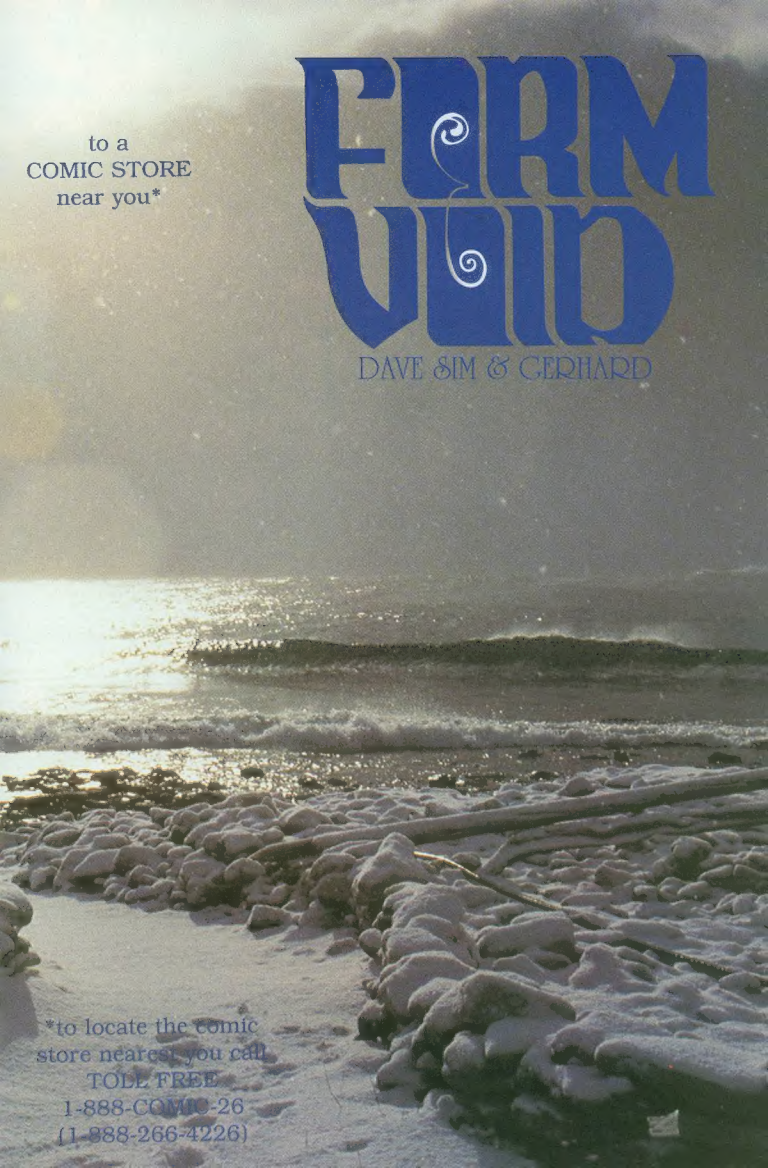
Jeff, I am saying, flat out, that you have lied. In lying, you have made a mess—a *non-masculine* mess.

You have made a mess.

Publicly.

Let's *you* and *me*, *man-to-man*, *clean up* the mess that you have made.

Privately.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